



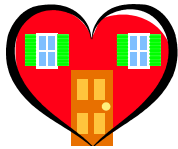
CFSA Fact Sheet



Wanted:

Nurturing Parents for Great Kids

At any given time, more than 3,000 District children and teens are living outside their birth homes under the care of the public child protection system. Over 1,000 District youngsters are hoping to be adopted. To provide the safety and stability these young people deserve, the community must help. CFSA urgently needs:



- **Foster homes in the District**, so kids who must leave their birth homes can remain in their own neighborhood.
- **Adoptive homes** where children or teens become family members.

About the Kids

Foster children are temporarily separated from their families due to abuse or neglect; abandonment; or incarceration, illness, or death of a parent. In some cases, these children will return home when their parents are able to protect and nurture them.

Adoptable children cannot return to their birth families and desperately need the commitment and security only a permanent home can provide. Through no fault of their own, many have had turbulent lives where family difficulties led to abuse or neglect.

Among CFSA's many wonderful foster and adoptable children are significant numbers of:

- **Older children, ages 6 to 17, including teen moms and their babies.**
- **Youngsters with disabilities.**
- **Brothers and sisters who want to stay together.**

**To see just a few
of the many children available
for adoption from CFSA . . .**

- Watch "Wednesday's Child" with Barbara Harrison during WRC-TV (Ch. 4) news at 5 p.m. every Wednesday.
- Visit www.adoptuskids.org or www.nac.org on the Internet.

Parent Qualifications

Foster and adoptive parents . . .

- Must be at least 21 years old.
- Can be married or single, with or without birth children in the home.
- Can be of any race, creed, or national origin.
- Need to be in good physical and mental health.
- Must be able to support their household financially.
- Cannot have a history of child abuse/neglect or criminal activity.

The most successful foster and adoptive parents enjoy children, like to parent, value family relationships, and have a strong personal support system. Many are motivated to make a positive difference in a young person's life or to contribute to the community.

Preparation

CFSA invites people interested in fostering or adopting to attend a two-hour orientation session offered twice a month. This is the place to get introductory information, ask questions, and learn about the challenges and rewards of foster care and adoption.

For people who decide to become foster or adoptive parents, CFSA provides free of charge:

- Application processing.
- Thirty hours of comprehensive pre-service training (two three-hour sessions a week for five weeks).
- Fingerprinting and background checks.
- A home study, including an in-depth interview of every person living in the home.
- A license (for foster parents only) that must be renewed every two years.

Support

Foster and adoptive parents do not “go it alone.”

- CFSA has two units of professional social workers and support staff dedicated to serving foster and adoptive parents and addressing their issues and concerns.
- Foster parents receive monthly payments designed to cover the costs of room and board for each CFSA child in the home. CFSA also pays for medical and dental care, clothing, and other necessities for foster children. Each child's social worker ensures that he/she receives necessary services, such as counseling and tutoring. Federal funds cover the cost of college tuition for all District foster children who qualify and want to attend.
- Financial subsidies are available to people who adopt some children from CFSA. These monthly payments are designed to cover the cost of caring for adopted children with disabilities or other special needs.
- To retain their licenses, foster parents get 15 hours of in-service training annually through CFSA. Varied course selections refresh and enhance parenting skills and suggest new ways to guide, nurture, and discipline children and teens. ■



**For more information about
becoming a foster or adoptive parent, call
(202) 671-LOVE**

Teens Doing Fine with Exceptional Foster Couple

In 1988, when another couple at church shared their experiences as foster parents, Gwen and Harold McAfee* decided they wanted to make a difference in the lives of children. They attended an orientation session, heard about the need for homes for older foster children, and committed to fostering teenagers. The McAfees were already the birth parents of two teens and felt prepared to work with others that age.



Today, the McAfees have fostered over 100 youngsters and adopted three. Many foster teens have come to their home with histories of severe abuse and neglect.

"Perhaps the greatest challenge was getting them to believe there was always

enough food and no need to hide food for later," Mr. McAfee says. "This really broke our hearts. We never want any child to go without food or the things most of us take for granted."

How have they sustained a commitment as foster parents for such a long time? "We really wanted to make a difference and worked as a team, both as a couple and as partners with CFSA," Mrs. McAfee says. "As parents, we understood our responsibilities for doctors' appointments, trips to the school, and all of the things required as foster parents. When I became seriously ill 8 years ago, Harold knew he had to carry on for the children, and he did. Closing our home was never an option. The children were always our responsibility. We made that commitment over 15 years ago and remain committed to doing all we can." ■

Adoptive Mom Finds Three Make a Family

Sisters Jennifer*, 9, and Monica*, 10, eagerly gathered their modest possessions in preparation for the arrival of their new mom. She was coming to pick them up from the foster home where they had lived since infancy. This was an exciting time for Jennifer and Monica, who had spent years wishing for a parent willing to adopt them together.

The girls' birth mother had not contacted them since they were little. Their birth father was incarcerated in another state. But the sisters' long wait for a "forever family" was about to end.

After suffering the death of a foster baby who was ill from birth and waiting more than two years to adopt, Barbara Jean (BJ) Summers* met Jennifer and Monica. Single and childfree, Summers considered adoption of older children the perfect way to build a family.

"I'm so happy to have my girls and love them so much. I can't think of anything I'd rather be doing at this time in my life," Summers said, beaming about an upcoming trip she was planning with the children.

Jennifer and Monica have thrived since being adopted and go everywhere with their new mom. Through Summers' commitment to their education, including home tutoring, both girls are learning Spanish and getting A's in math. ■



* Names have been changed to maintain confidentiality.